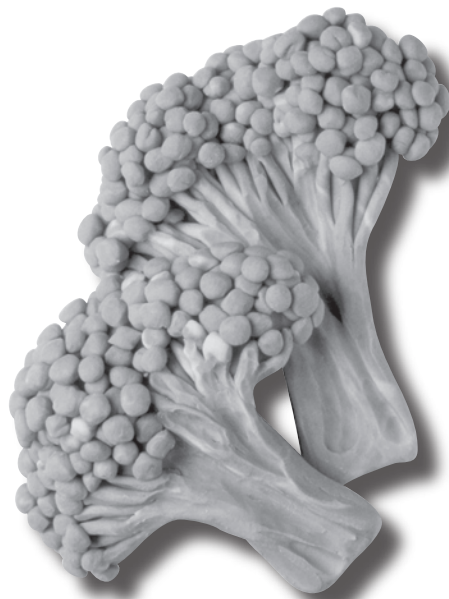


**MARKETING:**  
**A Must for**  
**Financial Success**



# Marketing: A MUST For Financial Success

**You've worked hard to open a student store stocked with healthful items for your students to enjoy and to help supply their bodies with essential nutrients. How can you be sure your customers will come to your store and purchase items?**

The bottom line — you need to market your product. In other words, simply offering healthful food and beverage items, doesn't guarantee their popularity among students. In order to be financially successful in selling healthful foods to students, you must devote time to marketing. Marketing includes:

- Determining what the customer wants and needs.
- Providing products or services that meet those wants and needs.
- Informing the customer about the availability of products and services and the benefits of using them.
- Selling products and services at prices that customer considers to be fair.

## **In Order to Properly Market, Address the Four P's of Marketing — Product, Place, Price, Promotion:**

**Product:** The goods or services that are provided to the customer. In the case of most student stores, food or non-food items are the goods.

**Place:** How, where, and when the product or service is provided. This would include the location and hours of operation for the student store.

**Price:** The value placed on the product or service being offered. The pricing structure is often determined by the unit cost of the product with a specific percentage mark up. The markup can range from 20-100% of unit cost.

**Promotion:** Influencing the acceptability and sale of the products and services to the customer. This could be done in several ways ranging from product line, pricing structure, and advertising strategies. Be sure to check out Montana's Own Top Ten Marketing Strategies on page 32.

In order to address these vital components, it is important to commit to developing a marketing plan. A marketing plan helps to:

- Organize small or large changes within a budget.
- Outline what your objectives are.
- Determine the most appropriate route toward achieving your objectives.

## **Designing a marketing plan:**

There are eight steps to a successful marketing plan, they include:

1. Establish measurable goals
2. Identify the target audience
3. Assess strengths and weaknesses
4. Develop a specific message
5. Develop strategies
6. Develop budget
7. Implement strategies
8. Evaluate results

# Marketing Plan

## WORKSHEET

*Utilize the "Marketing Plan" worksheet found on the this page to help address these key steps to developing a successful marketing plan:*

1. Establish Goals:

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2. Identify Target Audience:

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3. Assess Strengths and Weaknesses:

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4. Develop a Specific Message:

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5. Develop Strategies:

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6. Develop Budget:

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7. Implement Strategies:

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8. Evaluate Results:

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**Marketing Strategies** will depend on the age of the target customers and, in turn, these strategies need to be tailored to meet their needs and desires. In other words, what motivates teens to purchase fruits and vegetables may be very different from what motivates elementary students to purchase them. So an important first step to marketing is to conduct what is called *market research* with the target audience.

**Market Research** is nothing more than gathering information from your customers so you better understand what they are likely to purchase and how much they are willing to spend for specific food and beverage items. It can also help you determine what your store hours should be to best suit your customers' needs and could help to determine what other items (non-food) could be sold at the store.

## How To Conduct Market Research?

Market research can be accomplished in many ways. Two examples of strategies to gather this information are written surveys, or focus groups. Descriptions of these two market research strategies are described here:

### Surveys:

One way of gathering information from your target customers involves developing and distributing a short survey. The survey should contain questions that help to determine what types of products they desire and the price they are willing to pay for them. A sample survey is provided under the Resource Section on page 53.

If your target audience includes school staff, develop and distribute a short survey for them to complete. Often times the same survey can be used for both students and staff. Try printing it on a different colored paper so you can differentiate the various target groups.

If you are targeting sport teams, ask the coach if you can survey the athletes as to specific foods or beverages they may wish to purchase for after school snacks to give them energy for their practices.

### Focus Groups:

A focus group is a small (10-12) group of individuals to whom open-ended questions are asked in order to gain their opinions. Conduct a short focus group with a diverse selection of students to determine foods and beverages that are both popular with the students and fit the criteria established for healthy items.

This group could also participate in a taste test of a specific food item. For example, if you are considering offering a granola bar, have this group taste a few brands of granola bars and ask them to rate them. It is very important that when conducting taste tests, students don't bias other students so a rating sheet is used instead of having students voice their comments. Sample taste test-rating sheets are provided under the Resource Section on pages 55-56. A list of sample open-ended questions used in leading focus group discussions can be found under the Resource Section on page 52.

### Feedback:

This method allows you to obtain comments or feedback from customers concerning store hours, product line or advertising methods. This should be done periodically to help determine your customer's satisfaction level or potential changes you may want to make concerning product line or hours of operation.

Now that you have identified your customers' needs in terms of product line, store hours and pricing structure, it is time to focus on promotion. Implement all or some of these Montana's own strategies to help ensure your success.

# Montana's Own Top Ten Marketing Strategies

## 1. Give Your Store an Identity:

It is important that your store has an identity. The first step is to name your store. To get buy-in from the students, consider having a "Come up With a Store Name" contest to get a name that your customers (the students) identify with. At Terry High School, the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America store's name is the Snack Station with the marketing slogan of "Snack Station—Body Low on Fuel—Fuel Up!" This slogan encourages students to identify with the store by comparing it to a fuel station for their bodies.

## 2. Commit to Signage for the Store:

After it is named, make sure to post a sign with the store name and hours of operation in a location nearby the store to continually advertise it to anyone that walks by it even when it may not be open. This is very important as they say "A business without a sign is a sign of no business." It's a very good idea to have a sign advertising the store at all the main entrances of the school and other popular places (like outside the gym or cafeteria). It could say something like "Visit the Got Munchies Store in E wing for a delicious snack or drink. Open everyday before and after school. "

## 3. Product Placement is Important:

The placement of items is very important in marketing them to customers. Place the healthy items in the front of the counter and at eye level or above, so they are in full view by your customer. Display popular product labels in a window or on a poster to help market "branded products" to satisfy your customers' desires.

## 4. Promote Added Value:

A good rule of thumb is to remember the BEST approach to marketing healthy foods as adapted from a 2001 study aimed at improving the snack selection by college students.

*Promote foods from one of these four food choice factors:*

- B** = Budget Friendly (attractive price)
- E** = Energizing (healthful and smart choice)
- S** = Sensory satisfaction (good taste)
- T** = Time (convenient and easy to eat)

## 5. Tailor Product to Your Customer's Needs:

Market research with school aged (middle school) students has shown that many students will not purchase whole pieces of fruits or vegetables as they perceive them as hard to eat or messy. So, in offering fruit and vegetables, it is helpful if they are served in an easy to eat form. For example, apple slices, banana halves, orange wedges or slices, bunches of grapes, and baby carrots are easy to eat.

Some student stores purchase single servings from vendors or work with their school food service program to purchase single servings of pre-sliced fruits and vegetables with dips from their school food service.

*That way, the following items can be offered in a safe and easy manner:*

- Apple slices with a soufflé cup of caramel or peanut butter
- Celery sticks filled with peanut butter
- Carrots, celery, cucumber with a soufflé cup of ranch dressing (lite)
- Banana with a soufflé cup of chocolate sauce
- Canned single servings of assorted fruit (applesauce, mixed fruit, peaches)
- Single servings of fruit in gelatin

To keep inventory levels down, try offering just one of these items per week and track sales to determine the popular sellers. Promote it as the "Special of the Week".

## **6. Practice Suggestive Selling:**

Teach your employees to practice suggestive selling each time they making a sale. This simple technique can help you capitalize on the “power of suggestion” and has definitely been shown to increase sales. You have often heard the simple phrase “would you like fries with that burger, etc..”. So implement this technique and watch your sales increase. For example, use phrases like “Would you like a juice with that granola bar?” or “How about a string cheese with those pretzels?”

## **7. Run A Promotion:**

Promotions are important and can be fun for all involved. They can be a single event or a series of events, and they can accomplish a variety of goals. Consider running a fruit or vegetable promotion campaign to motivate students to try these items. A *promotion might be*:

- Giving out “free samples” of a fruit or vegetable. While students are picking up a sample, gather feedback regarding the appeal of the item and the students’ opinions of whether or not they would consider purchasing this item in the future. Or give a free sample with the purchase of another item as a Special of the Week.
- Having a fruit or vegetable sold with another popular item in a “combo” snack. For instance, a bagel and cream cheese could be sold with a piece of fruit in a sack and promoted as a High-Energy Snack or Smart Snack Sack.
- Offering a fruit or vegetable as the Special of the Week at a lower price is a great way to promote fruits and vegetables. For example if you can charge \$0.50 for a serving of fruits or vegetables when other foods cost \$0.75, this may help motivate more students to purchase them.

## **8. Be Customer-Oriented:**

Be sure employees greet customers with a smile. Learn student names. Wear nametags so that students can greet the employees by their names too. Empower your staff to provide quality service. Have employees consider how the food products looks to the customer and work on attractively displaying products. Remember we eat with our eyes!

## **9. Spread the Word That You are Selling Food:**

*Advertise!* Advertising is a critical component for successfully attracting customers to your store and bringing their attention to your product offerings. Consider implementing these advertising ideas:

- Hang posters around the school (in classrooms, hallways, cafeterias, locker rooms, and by the gym) advertising store hours and popular items. This is especially important when your store first opens.
- Display food items in the window, or on counters, and actually display the labels from the products in order to market specific “branded products” that may be popular with your customers.
- Advertise the store hours, popular items and promotions during the daily announcements.
- Write an article for the staff and school newsletters so students, staff and the community become aware of the store’s offerings, hours and prices. This is a great opportunity to promote the “value” of your product and increase everyone’s awareness that you are making an effort to sell and actively promote healthful items. Your customers may be very appreciative to know that there are food and beverage options besides the vending machines at your store.
- Hang posters that promote healthy foods and beverages. Make copies of the free posters available listed under the Resource Section on page 57 to educate your customers on what healthful snacks are, how healthful snacks will benefit them and examples of healthy snack selections.

## **10. Expand Your Customer Base:**

Offering healthy foods and beverages is a valuable service to your school community. Give everyone a chance to purchase healthy items and benefit from your student store selections. Advertise to students, sports teams, parents, teachers, and school administrators. Consider generating excitement and sales by making a presentation at a school board meeting.